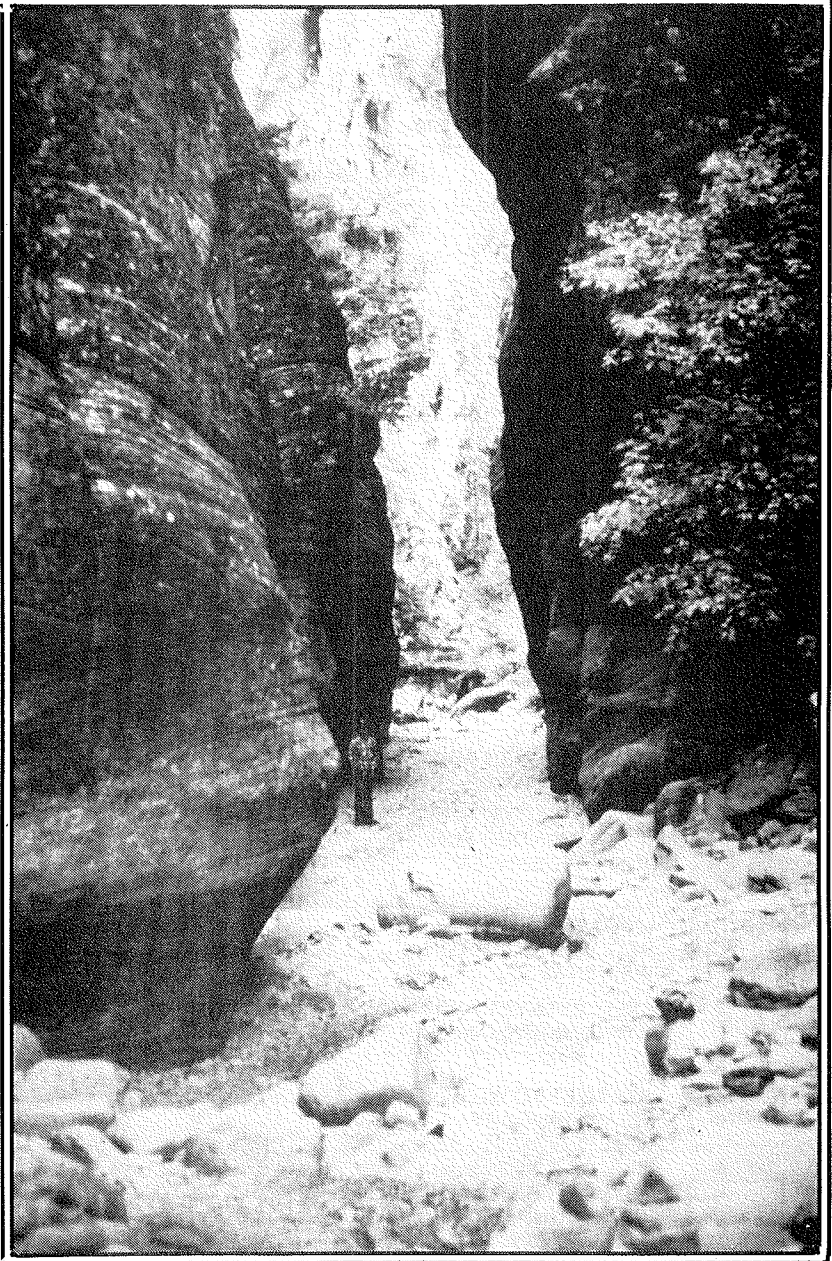


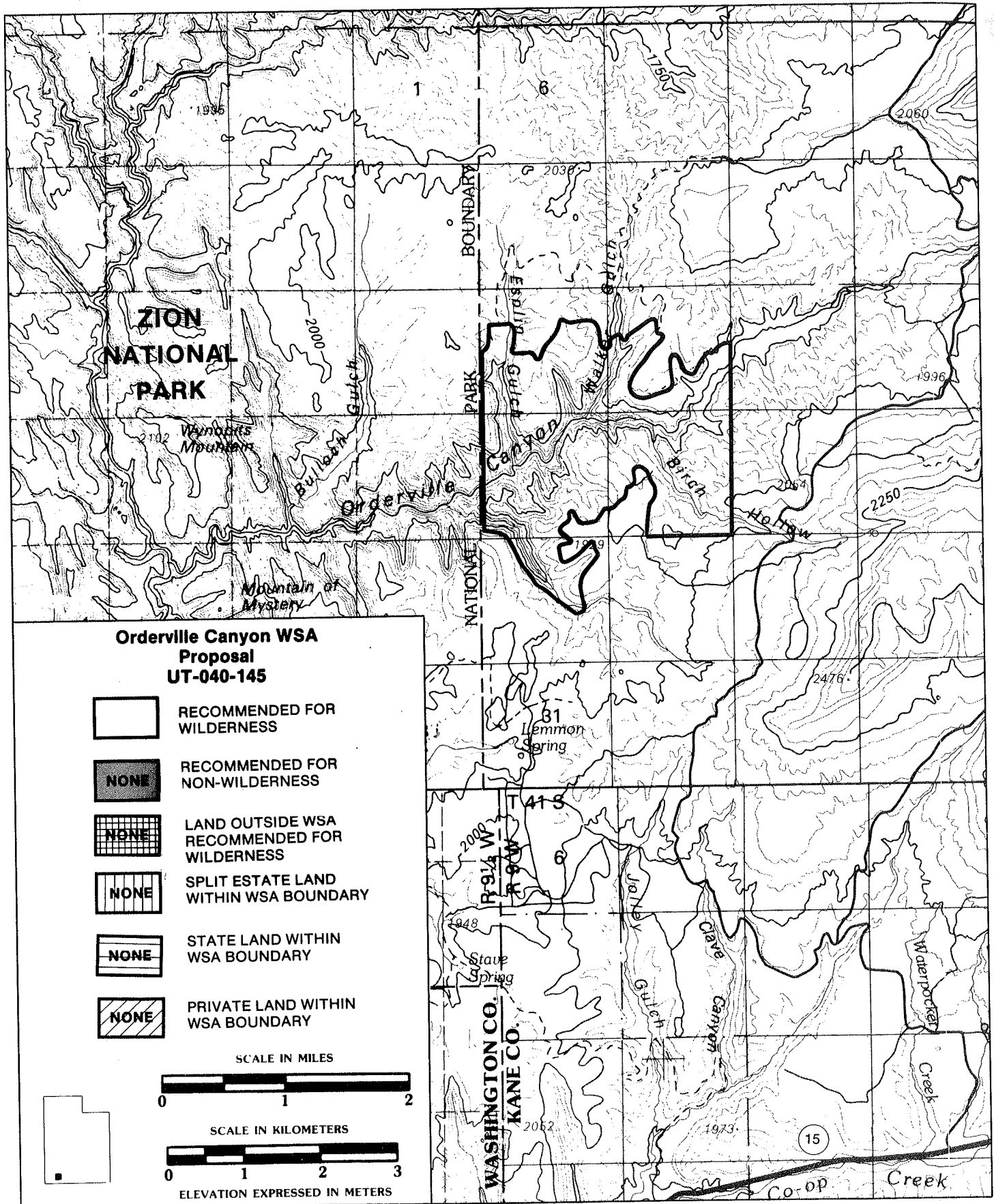
# Orderville Canyon WSA



# ORDERVILLE CANYON WSA

R. 10 W.

R. 9 W.



T. 40 S.

T. 41 S.

# **ORDERVILLE CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA**

## **1. THE STUDY AREA: 1,750 acres**

The Orderville Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA) (UT-040-145) is in western Kane County along the eastern boundary of Zion National Park, about 40 miles from Kanab, Utah (see Map). The WSA is entirely public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The WSA does not include any State, private, or split-estate lands (see Table 1). The study area is bordered by private land on the east. On the north and south, the boundary generally excludes the old logging areas and logging trails found at the edges of the upper canyon rims. The boundary is contiguous with the boundary of Zion National Park for about 1.5 miles.

The WSA is on the Grand Staircase at the southern end of the High Plateaus section of the Colorado Plateau Physiographic Province.

The WSA constitutes a 2-mile long segment of the upper Orderville Canyon (Orderville Gulch) and its several tributary canyons. Orderville Canyon falls upon a nearly exact east-west axis in the study area. Elevations range from about 5,100 feet on the canyon floor to 6,600 feet at the southwest edge of the WSA. Most of the area is covered by pinyon-juniper woodland with a sparse understory of brush, forbs, and grasses. The remainder of the WSA is dominated by mountain shrub.

The study area was dropped from wilderness status by the Secretary of the Interior in December, 1987, due to its small size, but because of its wilderness values and proximity to Zion National Park, including a National Park Service (NPS) endorsed wilderness proposal of 120,620 acres, it was studied under Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA).

**TABLE 1  
LAND STATUS AND ACREAGE SUMMARY IN THE STUDY AREA**

<b>WITHIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA</b>	<b>ACRES</b>
BLM (surface and subsurface)	1,750
Split-Estate (BLM surface only)	0
In-holdings (State, Private)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,750</b>
<b>WITHIN THE RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS BOUNDARY</b>	
BLM (within WSA)	1,750
BLM (outside WSA)	0
Split-Estate (within WSA)	0
Split-Estate (outside WSA)	0
<b>Total BLM land recommended for wilderness</b>	<b>1,750</b>
In-holdings (State, private)	0
<b>WITHIN THE AREA NOT RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS</b>	
BLM	0
Split-Estate	0
<b>Total BLM land not recommended for wilderness</b>	<b>0</b>
In-holdings (State, Private)	0

Source: BLM File Data

## ORDERVILLE CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

The study area was included in the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) finalized in November 1990.

Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: an all wilderness alternative, which is the recommendation in this report, and a no wilderness (no action) alternative.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE:

1,750 acres

(recommended for wilderness)

0 acres

(recommended for nonwilderness)

The recommendation in this report is to designate the study area as wilderness. Designation of the entire area as wilderness is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. Little or no conflict with other uses exists.

The WSA is small but can be effectively managed as wilderness. Although it is small, it is an extension of the high wilderness values found on adjacent NPS administered land in Zion National Park. Although the WSA has exceptional scenic values, these values are not as high as those displayed inside the National Park in the extremely rugged lower canyon as it confluences with the Zion Narrows of the North Fork of the Virgin River.

### 3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION

#### A. Naturalness

Naturalness is defined as an attribute in which the evidence of man is substantially unnoticeable to the average visitor and where minor imprints of man exhibit no cumulative impact that is substantially noticeable.

The WSA is in a natural condition. The WSA is an untouched deep canyon system with outstanding scenic values reminiscent of those of Zion National Park. The topography is rugged.

The majority of the vegetation cover is pinyon-juniper woodland with scattered Ponderosa pine. Cottonwood trees and

mountain shrubs grow in the canyon bottoms.

No surface-disturbing activities have occurred since the wilderness inventory in 1980.

#### B. Solitude

The opportunity to experience outstanding solitude is available in the deeply entrenched Orderville Canyon on 1,167 acres.

Some of the side canyons are narrow and moderately vegetated with oak brush, Ponderosa pine, and pinyon and juniper, providing both topographic and vegetative screening.

The upper bench areas, comprising about 583 acres (33 percent of the WSA) do not offer comparable outstanding opportunities for solitude.

#### C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Outstanding opportunities for backpacking, rock climbing, and sightseeing are available on about 1,167 acres (about 67 percent) of the WSA. Hiking and backpacking opportunities are associated with Zion National Park opportunities. Orderville Canyon is a route variation of the Zion Narrows hike of the North Fork of the Virgin River in the National Park.

The remaining 583 acres of the WSA lacking canyons do not provide outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation.

#### D. Special Features

The endangered bald eagle and peregrine falcon, as well as 13 additional animal species and four plant species that are considered to be sensitive, occur or may occur in the WSA (see Appendix 4 and the Affected Environment, Vegetation and Wildlife Including Special Status Species sections of the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness Final EIS). Cougar also use the WSA. Although these species add to the wilderness values of the WSA, they are not confined to the Orderville Canyon study area.

# ORDERVILLE CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

## Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

### A. Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of this WSA would not add an ecosystem that is not presently represented in the NWPS or other BLM study areas outside of Utah. This WSA is in the Colorado Plateau Province/Ecoregion. Juniper-pinyon woodland, the potential natural vegetation (PNV) that would develop if the WSA remained undisturbed, is represented in the NWPS in Utah in one wilderness area (Box-Death Hollow Wilderness, Dixie National Forest) and is represented in 53 other BLM study areas. This information is summarized in Table 2, from information compiled in December 1989.

### B. Assessing the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation within a Days Driving Time (5 Hours) of Major Population Centers

The WSA is within a 5-hour drive of Las Vegas, Nevada. Table 3 shows the number and acreage of designated wilderness areas and of other BLM study areas within a 5-hour drive of Las Vegas.

### C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

The Orderville Canyon WSA would not contribute significantly to balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas within the NWPS.

As of January, 1987, the NWPS included 65 wilderness areas comprising 2,898,792 acres in Utah, Arizona, and Nevada.

TABLE 2  
ECOSYSTEM REPRESENTATION

BAILEY-KUCHLER CLASSIFICATION (PNV)	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
NATIONWIDE (COLORADO PLATEAU PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	11	1,401,745	84	2,142,255
UTAH (COLORADO PLATEAU PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	1	26,000	53	1,704,448

Source: BLM File Data.

TABLE 3  
WILDERNESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS OF MAJOR POPULATION CENTERS

POPULATION CENTERS	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREA	ACRES
Las Vegas, Nevada	38	3,132,130	55	2,176,498

Source: BLM File Data.

Twelve designated wilderness areas are within 100 miles of the WSA. In a clockwise direction beginning to the north, are the 7,000-acre Ashdown Gorge Wilder-

ness (Forest Service [FS]), the 25,751-acre Box-Death Hollow Wilderness (FS), the 112,400-acre Paria Canyon-Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness (BLM), the 40,539-acre

## ORDERVILLE CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

Saddle Mountain Wilderness (FS), the 70,500-acre Kanab Creek Wilderness (FS and BLM units), the 6,860-acre Cottonwood Point Wilderness (BLM), the 7,880-acre Mt. Trumbull Wilderness (BLM), the 14,650-acre Mt. Logan Wilderness (BLM), the 37,030-acre Grand Wash Cliffs Wilderness (BLM), the 87,900-acre Paiute Wilderness (BLM), the 18,630-acre Beaver Dam Mountains Wilderness (BLM), and, to the west, the 50,000-acre Pine Valley Mountain Wilderness (FS).

Manageability (The area must be capable of being managed effectively to preserve its wilderness character.)

Overall the WSA could be effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character. Visitor access to Orderville Canyon and most of its tributary canyons is from private and public lands adjacent to the North Fork road and presently does not constitute a manageability problem. Visitor use associated with the Orderville Canyon route version of the Zion Narrows hike can be monitored and controlled through the cooperative efforts of the BLM and NPS.

The WSA receives relatively little grazing use. Two grazing permittees utilize 24 animal unit months (AUMs) of forage a year in the WSA. Recreational visitors spend between 500 and 1,000 visitor days annually in the WSA. Most of this use is in conjunction with use of Zion National Park. The WSA provides an access point to the park. There are no private or State in-holdings to interfere with wilderness management, and there are no mineral leases in the WSA. There is one mining claim in the WSA, but there are no prospects, deposits or any other evidence of mineralization known to occur in the area. There are no other valid rights in the study area.

### Energy and Mineral Resource Values

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the Bureau of Mines (USBM) prepared a mineral assessment report for the Orderville Canyon WSA (USGS Bulletin 1746-E, R.E. Van Loenen, et al., 1989). The report indicates that the mineral and energy potential for oil and gas is moderate, but is low for all metals and for geothermal sources. No resource potential exists for undiscovered coal.

Inferred, subeconomic deposits of about 20 million tons of surface-minable gypsum and of common sandstone and limestone are present within the WSA.

Subeconomic resources of common-variety sandstone and inferred subeconomic resources of limestone are within the WSA, but these commodities have low unit value and similar materials are available elsewhere in the region closer to transportation and to markets.

### Impacts on Resources

The comparative impact table (Table 4) summarizes the effects on wilderness values. These values are considered to be the only pertinent resource that would be significantly affected by designation or nondesignation of the area as wilderness.

### Local Social and Economic Considerations

Social and economic factors were not considered to be significant issues in the EIS.

### Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Comments received during the early stages of the EIS preparation were used to develop significant study issues and alternatives for the ultimate management of the WSA.

During formal public review of the Draft EIS, a total of 54 inputs specifically addressing this WSA were received from 62 commenters, including oral statements received at 17 public hearings on the EIS. Each letter or oral testimony was considered to be one input. Duplicate letters or oral statements by the same commenter were not counted as additional inputs or signatures. Each individual was credited with one signature or testimony regardless of the number of inputs.

In general, 55 commenters supported wilderness designation for part or all of the WSA, while six addressed the relative merits of the EIS but took no formal position on wilderness designation. One of the commenters was opposed to wilderness designation.



## ORDERVILLE CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

Those favoring wilderness commented on the wilderness values, including special features and opportunities for primitive recreation. The majority of those commenting in favor of wilderness were from rural and urban Utah and outside the state, in almost equal numbers. Of particular concern was the need to protect wilderness values and to complement proposals for wilderness in the adjacent Zion National Park.

Two Federal agencies, the USBM and NPS, commented on the Draft EIS for the Orderville Canyon WSA. The USBM indicated that the Draft EIS was written without the findings of the USGS and USBM mineral reports, and that the reports would be ready for use in the Final EIS. Their report was utilized in preparation of the Final EIS. The USBM also stated that BLM had underestimated the petroleum potential of the WSA.

The NPS supported wilderness designation for the WSA, provided information on potential for endangered species in the area and questioned changes in forage allocations and mining claims in the WSA between 1982 and publication of the Draft EIS.

No comment letters were received on the Final EIS.

There are no State sections in the WSA. In commenting on the Draft EIS, the State of Utah expressed general opposition to wilderness designation but did not take a definite position regarding wilderness designation of the WSA. The State commented that the less than 5,000-acre areas surrounding Zion National Park, including the Orderville Canyon WSA, are natural, logical extensions of Zion National Park. The State noted that there are land use conflicts found in gas company reports on the area. These reports identify oil and gas potential in LaVerkin Creek Canyon, Deep Creek, North Fork Virgin River, Red Butte, Spring Creek Canyon, The Watchman, Taylor Creek Canyon, Goose Creek Canyon and Beartrap Canyon WSAs. The State suggested that given the small size of the units and their adjacency to Zion National Park, additional study should be given to the potential of transferring most of these WSAs from BLM to NPS management. The BLM and NPS agree

that transferral of administration is a separate issue, independent of the wilderness review.

The State also suggested wording changes in the geology section of the EIS.

The Orderville Canyon WSA is in Kane County. The Kane County Master Plan supports the total concept of multiple use of lands and rejects wilderness as an exclusionary recreational form that cannot be used by the average recreation visitor. The County Commission has indicated that they do not support wilderness designation for this WSA. In commenting on the Draft EIS, Kane County opposed designation of the WSA and questioned its WSA status because it is less than 5,000 acres. They suggested that inclusion of the Orderville Canyon WSA in a national park expansion bill would be the most appropriate management measure.

# ORDERVILLE CANYON WSA

Table 4  
Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative

Alternatives		
Recommendation All Wilderness (1,750 Acres)		
Issue Topics	No Action/No Wilderness	
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values would be preserved. Designation would complement and enhance the NPS wilderness proposal for the contiguous portion of Zion National Park.	Wilderness values would not be protected by wilderness designation. No disturbance that would significantly affect wilderness values is projected in the foreseeable future. This alternative would not complement the NPS wilderness proposal for the contiguous portion of Zion National Park.